16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

792 A very complex representation would seem to be involved here, in which ideas about persons and ideas about Spirit are mixed together with regard to a man who in one way of thinking about him is man and in another way of thinking about him is Spirit and who is also conceived of as both man and Spirit.

792 As explained in Chapter II, the chief function of such prophets as gained any considerable following and became political figures ● 787 was their hermeneutic role in warfare. They spoke the directions of the spirits of the air for raids on the Dinka[1] and for resistance to the slavers and the administration and made sacrifices to them. Their other functions were subsidiary and were exercised by lesser [755] prophets also: healing, particularly curing barrenness of women, staying of epidemics lethal to men or cattle, and exorcism of troublesome spirits. They were also credited with power to foretell events and with a more than usual insight (*gwic*). A prophet heals people by rubbing his spittle on them or by sprinkling them with water, milk, or butter, and his inspiration gives him foreknowledge, but he, like anyone else, relies on sacrifice in times of trouble; and he may be asked to sacrifice for any purpose except on those occasions reserved to the priesthood. People ask him to sacrifice on their behalf, not because they cannot make sacrifice themselves, but because sacrifice by him is felt to have special efficacy in that he has a special and intimate association with Spirit. Nevertheless, though prophets, like priests, may sacrifice on behalf of other people, the distinctive character of the prophet is not, as it is of the priest, his sacrificial role, but his revelational role deriving from spiritual inspiration. Hence, so I have been told, women, as well as men, may become minor prophets, though I believe only an old, and possibly barren, woman, of whom Nuer say '*coa wut*', 'she has become a man', would do so. A female prophet would not sacrifice.

792 668 I mentioned briefly, because I have treated the matter elsewhere, the political significance of the Nuer priests, their office being a politico-religious institution of the traditional social order. The prophets can also be regarded from the same point of view, as a politico-religious institution which has recently emerged in answer to changes in the social order. It may be hard to believe that people with prophetic powers have not always existed among the Nuer, but there is no evidence that they have; and all Nuer with whom

[1] They acquired substantial herds from their share of the booty.